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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000180

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FOR AF, AF/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2017
TAGS: [PINS](#) [AEMR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PUTS GENERAL KERFALLA ON NOTICE THAT HE
WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

Classified By: Ambassador Jackson McDonald. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On February 14, the Ambassador, accompanied by DATT, met with Chief of Staff of the Guinean Armed Forces General Kerfalla Camara at Camp Samory Toure in downtown Conakry.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador strongly regretted that the general strike had led to a state of siege instead of a peaceful settlement through political dialogue. He noted that, under the state of siege, General Kerfalla now had greater powers but also greater responsibilities for the comportment of his men and for the future of Guinea.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador warned General Kerfalla that he and entire Guinean Armed Forces would be judged by how they exercise their special powers during this time of crisis. He urged Kerfalla to order his forces to use restraint. He said there have already been reports of serious abuses. He said individual freedoms have been suspended under the state of siege, but that does not give the armed forces free rein to intimidate or abuse the population. He reiterated that General Kerfalla and his troops would be held accountable for their actions, including grave violations of human rights.

¶4. (C) General Kerfalla replied that the armed forces had been given a mission: stop the looting and rampant destruction; reestablish order. He said he had no other plans or ambitions beyond fulfilling this mission.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked General Kerfalla whether the state of siege would be lifted before the end of the 12-day period. Would it run its full term? Or would it be extended beyond February 23?

¶6. (C) General Kerfalla replied that he did not want the state of siege to last one day longer than necessary. He said he had spoken earlier in the day with National Assembly President Aboubacar Sompore to push for the resumption of dialogue with the labor unions.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador agreed: the state of siege should be lifted asap; dialogue must resume.

¶8. (C) General Kerfalla said the armed forces were duty-bound to protect all/all Guineans, without exception. He declared that the armed forces would complete their mission; they would end lawlessness and destruction and reestablish order in Guinea. That is our mission; we did not ask for it, he concluded.

¶9. (C) The Ambassador asked General Kerfalla how he saw the current crisis unfolding. Kerfalla repeated that he had encouraged Sompore to resume dialogue with the labor unions and others. The Ambassador said that, under the state of

siege, many leaders of the labor unions, opposition political parties, and civil society feared arrest or worse. They could not be expected to negotiate with the government if they feared for their lives.

¶10. (C) The Ambassador said that if General Kerfalla really wanted to promote dialogue, then he should state publicly that these interlocutors had nothing to fear and that he would personally guarantee their security.

¶11. (C) General Kerfalla replied that he would be willing to arrange military escorts for union leaders and others to and from the negotiation sessions to guarantee their safety. (Note: Radio-Television Guinee subsequently broadcast an invitation to unions and others to meet at 1400 hours today at the Palais du Peuple with the Presidents of the National Assembly, Supreme Court, and Economic and Social Council, as well as religious leaders "under the auspices" of General Kerfalla. Security was assured. We are encouraging the union leaders to attend.)

¶12. (C) The Ambassador lobbied Kerfalla hard to remove restrictions on the movement of diplomatic vehicles (currently limited to ten hours a day from 0800 to 1800 hours). The Ambassador argued that, regardless of the state of siege, the Republic of Guinea still had to meet its international obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, including, inter alia, respecting diplomatic immunities, protecting diplomatic missions, and guaranteeing freedom of movement.

¶13. (C) General Kerfalla responded that his first responsibility towards diplomats was to guarantee their security. He said he could not do so after dark, because it was impossible for his patrols to distinguish between

CONAKRY 00000180 002 OF 002

diplomatic and non-diplomatic vehicles after nightfall. It was thus imperative, he said, for diplomatic vehicles not be on the road after 1800 hours.

¶14. (C) The Ambassador said that the U.S. Embassy works around the clock, when necessary. It was essential that he and his staff be able to go to and from the embassy at any time, day or night. Kerfalla replied that he would provide a military escort during curfew hours, if necessary. The Ambassador said that wasn't good enough. He asked Kerfalla to consider our request to lift restrictions on diplomatic vehicles an active, outstanding issue with the goal of removing these restrictions as soon as possible.

¶15. (C) The Ambassador asked General Kerfalla about the cohesiveness of his forces, noting that in an earlier conversation Kerfalla had acknowledged that it was not always possible to know the intentions of officers and men within the ranks. Kerfalla responded that there had been some problems, but they have been "circumscribed."

¶16. (C) General Kerfalla authorized the KC-135 to land again in Conakry on February 15 at 1600 hours.
MCDONALD